



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

DHMH Urges Parents and Caregivers to Get Their Car Seats Inspected Child Passenger Safety Week is September 18-24 New recommendations released

Baltimore, Maryland (September 15, 2011) – Maryland Kids In Safety Seats, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's (DHMH) child passenger safety program, encourages parents and caregivers to have their children's car seats checked in light of new car seat recommendations recently released by the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

During Child Passenger Safety Week, September 18-24, certified child passenger safety technicians all over Maryland will be available to inspect car seats and provide free hands-on advice on car seat usage. A list of dates, times and locations of seat checks are available at the Kids In Safety Seats web site www.mdkiss.org.

"Now is a great time to take advantage of free seat checks," said Dr. Joshua M. Sharfstein, DHMH Secretary. "Everyone should be sure that child safety restraints are appropriate and secure."

In motor vehicle crashes, car seats reduce the risk of fatal injury by 71 percent for children younger than one and by 54 percent for children one to four in passenger cars, according to data collected by NHTSA. In 2009 alone, 754 children 12 or younger were killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes while riding in passenger cars or light trucks. And among those who were fatally injured where restraint use was known, 42 percent were unrestrained. Many of these tragedies could have been prevented if the children were in the right restraint for their age and size.

The updated recommendations emphasize how important it is to keep children in each restraint type for as long as possible before moving them to the next type.

Birth – 12 months

For the best possible protection, your child under age one should always ride in a rear-facing car seat. There are different types of rear-facing car seats: infant-only seats can only be used rear-facing. Convertible and 3-in-1 car seats typically have higher height and weight limits for the rear-facing position, allowing you to keep your child rear-facing for a longer period of time.

1 – 3 years

Your child should remain in a rear-facing car seat until he or she reaches the top height or weight limit allowed by your car seat's manufacturer. This may result in many children riding rear-facing to age 2 or older. Once your child outgrows the rear-facing car seat, your child is ready to travel in a forward-facing car seat with a harness.

4 – 7 years

Keep your child in a forward-facing car seat with a harness until he or she reaches the top height or weight limit allowed by your car seat's manufacturer. Once your child outgrows the forward-facing car seat with a harness, it's time to travel in a booster seat, but still in the back seat.

8 – 12 years

Keep your child in a booster seat until he or she is big enough to fit in a seat belt properly. For a seat belt to fit properly the lap belt must lie snugly across the upper thighs, not the stomach. The shoulder belt should lie snugly across the shoulder and chest and not cross the neck or face.

Remember:

- Select a car seat based on your child's age and size, and choose a seat that fits in your vehicle and use it every time.
- Always refer to your specific car seat manufacturer's instructions; read the vehicle owner's manual on how to install the car seat using the seat belt or LATCH system; and check height and weight limits.
- To maximize safety, keep your child in the car seat for as long as possible, as long as the child fits within the manufacturer's height and weight requirements.
- Keep your child in the back seat at least through age 12.

For more information about Child Passenger Safety Week or to find your local car seat event, visit www.nhtsa.gov.

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